



Operation RIO Update

12 December 2003

The Jaguar II sits in Berth 9 at Port Az Zubayr ready for the imported diesel to be offloaded. (see page 3) Army Corps of Engineers Photo.

An update for all SWD employees and Operation RIO volunteers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mission Update: Good news! TF RIO set two new post-combat records on 17 Dec 03 in total production and Southern Oil Field production with 2.368 million barrels total production of which 2 million barrels came from the South. In further good news, import levels are improving across the refined products spectrum. This is an effect of both improved convoy security as a result of FRAGO 1197 and the resolution of contract delivery issues. While not enough to overcome shortfalls, there is progress being made.

Planning and preparations for the new USACE Gulf Region Division continues. There was a "rock drill" held with MG Johnson on 16 Dec. The purpose of the rock drill was for all the parties supporting the new Division to sit down and talk through the processes involved in standing up the Division. The drill consisted of three parts: a review of the Operations Order; the methodology of Reception, Staging and Onward Integration of personnel; and transition of elements currently in theater. While there are many very difficult outstanding issues with establishing the Division, progress is being made here also.

A view from down range: Mike Bishop

By Carolyn Vadino

Whether taking video 100 ft above the oil fields in southern Iraq, getting GPS data for an oil well, or dancing to James Brown in his work trailer at Camp Pioneer, Mike Bishop has made



the best out of his experience in Iraq. And to say that the research physical scientist from ERDC was just here as a GIS specialist who produced maps, would be like saying Madonna is just a singer that has put on a few concerts.

That is because Mike Bishop is pure entertainment. From the time he walks into his work trailer in the early mornings, until after the workday is officially done, and the music is unofficially louder, Bishop enjoys creating a comfortable atmosphere for himself and his colleagues.

In his own words, he has tried to make his work trailer a home away from home.

"We are really lucky to have people we have.

There is a mood you can feel just when you walk in the door, and some may be luck, but some we are responsible for, because of our attitude in life," Bishop says down playing the importance of his technical role here.

Bishop, who is responsible for updating important and often sensitive information on maps for navigational purposes, chooses to talk about the people he met and his personal experiences, instead of the work he has done. In fact, Bishop rarely shares his work experience here.

"I have been awfully quiet about the work I do for safety and security reason," he said. "People everywhere like to talk about stories, but I wasn't comfortable discussing places or functions of facilities because that could bring a target into light."

And the technical work he has done can be seen all over camp; maps hang from office walls and are tucked neatly into Corps vehicles. A self proclaimed data gather, Bishop has worked hard to ensure his coworkers going into the field have the most up to date maps at all time.

But instead of speaking about that, his family, whom he writes daily, receives details about his life in the trailer, and certain aspects of the sights he has seen in Iraq and Kuwait.

"They didn't like to hear about people with AK-47s, or details like the bullets flying the other day," he said recalling a time when he almost got caught in crossfire while driving in the field. "They don't care to imagine that, so I tell them about countryside and what people wear; what they are living in, how long it takes to get to Kuwait and back and the roads we travel on."

Bishop has also been dutiful about making sure his six-year-old daughter, Angelina, whose drawings are proudly displayed on his work lockers, knows what her father's life has been like for the past four months.

"The whole time I was here I was writing to her at her class. I wrote it to Angelina and addressed it to Miss. Elizabeth, so they read each one of my letters before the class and all the children got the benefit of my stories and the pictures that I attached."

He also has sent back souvenirs such as a mosque clock, Operation Iraqi Freedom coins and T-shirts, and magic lamps to members of the class.

And Bishop, along with others in the trailer, have purchased and created things to leave behind in Iraq as well. He believes it has contributed to the fun environment in the work trailer, which has resulted in friendships that will stretch across the Corps after he returns.

"Our trailer would be a quiet work space like a library if Rich (Bulvid), Wayne (Stroupe) and I didn't buy the CD player. It makes the time pass and the evenings light. While we are all sitting there listening we are sharing-the time, sharing the music, and the songs we listened to."

"There is a limited library of music and songs we have here, and whether it is on the radio or at a party, when we hear them again, it will be hard for us not to remember being here and sharing the time together," he said. "We watch out for one another, and we share. When things aren't right, we all lend a hand for ideas to fix it," he said.

Bishop attributes the tools and the toolboxes here to helping maintain a sense of balance.

"The benefit of the tools, and the shelves we built in the trailer, is that we built things that will remain here as permanent fixtures and other people that come may look at it and not think twice about it, that it has always been here. But we built it, just like when we built the flagpole. That was a big thing for me."

People at Camp Pioneer know Bishop's work trailer by the Corps flag that flies above it every morning. And building the pole, was just one of many examples of people working together to accomplish a mission. All it took was acquiring a pipe, some parachute string, hooks, a drill, and digging a hole in the ground.

"A couple of the Iraqis, the Karafi guys and the locals, stopped by and helped us dig the hole, so it was more than just us doing it. It was a proud moment," he said. "I know those moments are important to me and I think it is pretty fair to say they are important to the others."

While Bishop also credits driving 115 miles per-hour, and having the opportunity to fly in a British Sea King helicopter as experiences he will remember, ultimately, the people he has met have been his biggest influence. He also said he learned a great deal about oil and oil extraction.

"I owe the majority of it to Major Tom Langlois," he recalled. "He patiently listened to all my questions and answered them. He



developed an Oil 101 course/lecture and there were quite a few people that sat in on that and we hung on every word, because he really delivered it in a fashion that made a lot of sense to all of us. And I have no previous oil experience," he said.

Bishop also said he enjoyed helping others out when they needed a hand.

"I may have helped the team out, but truly, it helped me out," he said recalling the doors, wall lockers and other items around camp he has helped fix. "It is difficult to sit at a desk 12 hours a day every day, and not be able to get up and go do something different."

Luckily, Bishop he has had plenty of opportunity to explore the Iraq countryside, GPS in hand, and bring back all the information he collected to share with his colleagues here.

"The hardest part for me right now is, I believe that I have a good understanding of what needs to be done and how things work, and how I could effectively address both," he said. "So, now that I am trained it will be hard to walk away from it."

However, Bishop already has plans for his holiday return to the United States. He and Angelina will drive from Mississippi to New York, where he plans on spending quality time with his parents, his brother and sister and retrieving his two dogs, Bula and Scott.

Saddam Head removed: With the capture of the Ace of Spades by the 4th Infantry Division, it is only appropriate that we include a couple of photographs removing the busts of Saddam Hussein from the Presidential Palace.



Norman Skjelbria, Seattle District, served as the Safety Officer on this project.

Importing diesel by ship: The Jaguar II, an 11,000 ton tanker, arrived at Khor Az Zubayr Port with 7,000 tons of diesel to be offloaded.

"Being able to import by ship will allow us to bring in a lot more product, a lot faster," said Everett Laney, project engineer for the Khor Az Zubayr Port. "This will greatly increase our ability to meet demand."

On hand for a small celebration were representatives from The Petroleum Pipeline Company, the Port Manager and Iraqi Oil Ministry officials.

The Army Corps of Engineers, KBR, Khor Az Zubayr Port Officials and the Ministry of Oil have worked jointly to assure success of this project.



"HOOAH!!"

*Robert Crear, Brigadier General, USA
Commander, Southwestern Division*